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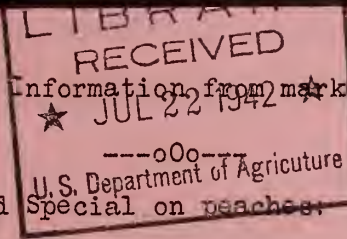
homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Monday, July 20, 1942

Subject: "VICTORY PEACHES". Information from marketing specialists of the U.S.
Department of Agriculture



Now we have a Victory Food Special on ~~peaches~~. It began last Thursday, July 16, and will run through all of this month and until August 5. Of course, you know, that a Victory Food Special means there is plenty of this particular food--and that it is at its seasonal peak, both in quality and quantity. So the word passed around by the Department of Agriculture is "eat more and more peaches." And while peaches are plentiful, you might put up a few jars for the coming winter. Remember the prices are lowest when the peaches are most plentiful.

Peaches have always been regarded as a great delicacy. Why, even as far back as the First Century A.D., that famous Roman, Pliny the Elder, wrote of peaches: "This is a very harmless fruit, and a particular favorite with invalids. Some, in fact, have sold as high as thirty sesterces (SES-TERS-ES) apiece-- a price that has never been exceeded by any other fruit." You see, this would be about \$1.20 for one peach. Thank goodness, we don't have to pay that price. But let's turn back the pages of history for a minute and visit one of those ancient Roman homes in the city of Pompeii, where Pliny lived. He saw his last days when the volcano Vesuvius erupted and covered Pompeii with ashes. When the ruins of the city were unearthed, it was found that those Romans really lived well. Their homes, the furnishings, their gardens--their marble baths, their jewels, their clothes were really something at which to marvel! So just stretch your imagination a little and let's look in on one of those famed Pompeian feasts. I am told that the guests reclined on couches during the meal, so that they could eat more. Let's picture the mistress of the house saying to one of her many servants: "Do bring in the dessert, Lucretia--

that luscious fruit which has come to us from the merchants of Persia."

Now, continuing Pliny's letter, he wonders at the popularity of the peach in view of the high price, for, as he writes,..... "there is no fruit that is a worse keeper, for when it is plucked, the longest that it will keep is a couple of days, and sold it must be, fetch what it may." So you see, even in those days, as in ours, peaches had to be eaten as soon as they came from the market to keep them from spoiling. Of course, I don't know that the Roman wife got her peaches from Persia. They may have come from a closer market. But Darwin and other naturalists believed that the first peaches came from Persia and they were probably called "Persica"--hence peach. He believed they originated from the wild almond, and that from it cultivated almonds, nectarines and peaches were developed. Another theory is that the peach was first known by the Chinese.

But let's have a look at today's market and see what is happening to our American peaches. We will have a bumper crop for the country as a whole--almost one-fourth above the average, although some states will not produce as much as in an average year. There are ten Southern States from which our earliest peaches come. In fact, one-third of the entire crop of peaches grown in the United States comes from this section of the country. We're told this year's crop in these 10 states is more than half above the average, so we're going to have peaches!..... Perhaps some of you are old enough to remember that old song about, "My Georgia Peach." -- Well, right now most of our peaches are coming from Georgia. Arkansas, the Carolinas and California market their largest crops from the latter part of July through early August. The New England areas and other northern States ship their peaches later in August, and in September. You see, this scatters peaches out over the summer so that you'll find them on markets for at least several months. Our annual peach crop for all the States is around 70 million bushels a year. That means if you eat your quota of peaches--every man, woman, and child in the United

States would consume about half a bushel a year!

Now, here's some tips in buying peaches. Peaches are a good source of Vitamin A--especially the yellow peaches. So select peaches whose color has changed from its original green to white or yellow. The peach with the rosy blush may not necessarily be a ripe peach--unless the background color has turned to yellow. Good peaches should be fairly firm. You can tell from the appearance of the fruit--or from examining one or two. But don't be a peach-pincher. It spoils the fruit for other buyers. It's well to remember Pliny's advice about the peach spoiling so quickly.

There are many, many ways to serve peaches--I need only name a few. Peach pie, peach cobbblers, peach dumplings and peaches, fresh or canned, may be used in so many combinations for salads; but it's hard to beat fresh peaches for dessert, served with or without cream. That's the way to eat them to get full benefit of their vitamin content. Standing on its merits as a dessert, the peach has been popular longer than man can remember. Before history books began, man was eating peaches fresh out of hand. So you see, you're really enjoying a long prized delicacy when you partake of this Victory Food Special. -- And just a few words about Victory Food Specials! These foods have an especial patriotic appeal. When you buy them for your family, when you serve them on your table--it's a new way of "eating your way to Victory." Now, that's a rather strange phrase--"Eating your way to Victory," but let's see what the Department of Agriculture says about these Victory Food Specials. It's going to take lots and lots of food for our military forces--our sons, our husbands and our fathers, who are fighting for Victory! ...And our Allies need food. We must keep the spirit of freedom alive by feeding the hungry civilian populations of Europe, who are doing their share for Victory. To feed all these people and our armies, not one item of food must be allowed to waste. So the Department of Agriculture has designated certain foods--when they are abundant and can best be spared to be eaten fresh--as Victory Food Specials. You'll see advertising in stores and special displays telling you about these Victory Food Specials. A market basket filled with foodstuffs with a bold Victory "V" in the foreground--and the words, "Victory Food Special" written through the "V" tells you, "This is a Victory Food Special."

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